CLAIMS

That which is claimed is:

1. A cushioning component for an article of footwear, the cushioning component comprising:

a chamber having a first surface and an opposite second surface peripherally joined to form a volume for receiving a fluid, the first surface and the second surface being devoid of internal connections that secure interior portions of the first surface to interior portions of the second surface, the first surface and the second surface defining a plurality of lobes extending outward from a central area of the chamber, the lobes being in fluid communication with the central area, and the lobes defining spaces positioned between the lobes located adjacent to each other; and

inserts positioned within the spaces, the inserts being formed of a resilient material.

2. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein a pressure of the fluid is in a range of zero to five pounds per square inch.

3. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein a pressure of the fluid is approximately equal to an ambient pressure of air surrounding the sole structure.

4. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein the fluid is air.

5. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein a first layer of polymer material extends over at least a portion of the first surface and is secured to the inserts.

6. The cushioning component recited in claim 5, wherein a second layer of the polymer material extends over at least a portion of the second surface and is secured to the inserts.

7. The cushioning component recited in claim 6, wherein the first layer and the second layer are formed integral with the inserts.

8. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein layers of material extend over the first surface and the second surface, the inserts being secured to the layers of material and extending between the layers of material.

9. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein the inserts are positioned adjacent a sidewall of the chamber, the sidewall extending between the first surface and the second surface.

10. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein each insert includes a first portion positioned adjacent the first surface and a second portion positioned adjacent the second surface.

11. The cushioning component recited in claim 10, wherein the first portion is secured to the second portion.

12. The cushioning component recited in claim 10, wherein the first portion is formed of three concave structures, and the second portion is formed of three concave structures.

13. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein central areas of the first surface and the second surface have a substantially planar configuration.

14. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein the chamber includes at least five of the lobes.

15. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the inserts are bonded to the chamber.

16. The cushioning component recited in claim 1, wherein the inserts are less compressible than the chamber.

17. A cushioning component for an article of footwear, the cushioning component comprising:

a chamber enclosing a fluid having a pressure approximately equal to an ambient pressure of air surrounding the cushioning component, the chamber having a first surface and an opposite second surface peripherally joined to form a volume for receiving the fluid, the first surface and the second surface being devoid of internal connections that secure interior portions of the first surface to interior portions of the second surface, the first surface and the second surface defining a plurality of lobes extending outward from a central area of the chamber, the lobes being in fluid communication with the central area, and the lobes defining spaces positioned between the lobes located adjacent to each other; and

a covering element having a first layer, a second layer, and a plurality of inserts extending between the first layer and the second layer, the first layer extending over at least a portion of the first surface, the second layer extending over at least a portion of the second surface, and the inserts being positioned within the spaces.

18. The cushioning component recited in claim 17, wherein the fluid is air.

19. The cushioning component recited in claim 17, wherein the inserts are less compressible than the chamber.

20. The cushioning component recited in claim 17, wherein each insert includes a first portion positioned adjacent the first surface and a second portion positioned adjacent the second surface.

21. The cushioning component recited in claim 20, wherein the first portion is secured to the second portion.

22. The cushioning component recited in claim 20, wherein the first portion is formed of three concave structures, and the second portion is formed of three concave structures.

23. The cushioning component recited in claim 17, wherein central areas of the first surface and the second surface have a substantially planar configuration.

24. The cushioning component recited in claim 17, wherein the chamber includes at least five of the lobes.

25. The cushioning component recited in claim 17, wherein the inserts are positioned adjacent a sidewall of the chamber, the sidewall extending between the first surface and the second surface.

26. The cushioning component recited in claim 17, wherein at least a portion of the inserts are bonded to the chamber.

27. A cushioning component for an article of footwear, the cushioning component comprising:

a chamber having a first surface and an opposite second surface peripherally joined to form a volume for receiving a fluid, the first surface and the second surface being devoid of internal connections that secure interior portions of the first surface to interior portions of the second surface, the first surface and the second surface defining a plurality of lobes extending outward from a central area of the chamber, the lobes being in fluid communication with the central area, and the lobes defining spaces positioned between the lobes located adjacent to each other; and

a covering element having a first layer, a second layer, and a plurality of inserts extending between the first layer and the second layer, the first layer extending over the first surface, the second layer extending over the second surface, and the inserts being positioned within the spaces, each insert having a first portion and a second portion, the first portion being located adjacent the first surface and the second portion being located adjacent the second surface, and the first portion being joined with the second portion to secure the covering element to the chamber, the inserts having a configuration that is less compressible than the chamber.

28. The cushioning component recited in claim 27, wherein a pressure of the fluid is in a range of zero to five pounds per square inch.

29. The cushioning component recited in claim 27, wherein a pressure of the fluid is approximately equal to an ambient pressure of air surrounding the sole structure.

30. The cushioning component recited in claim 27, wherein the fluid is air.

31. The cushioning component recited in claim 27, wherein the first portion is formed of three concave structures, and the second portion is formed of three concave structures.

32. The cushioning component recited in claim 27, wherein central areas of the first surface and the second surface have a substantially planar configuration.

33. An article of footwear comprising:

an upper for receiving a foot of a wearer; and

a sole structure secured to the upper, the sole structure including:

a midsole formed of a polymer foam material, and

a cushioning component at least partially encapsulated by the foam material of the midsole, the cushioning component having a chamber and a plurality of inserts, the chamber enclosing a fluid having a pressure approximately equal to an ambient pressure of air surrounding the cushioning component, and the chamber having a first surface and an opposite second surface peripherally joined to form a volume for receiving the fluid, the first surface and the second surface being devoid of internal connections that secure interior portions of the first surface to interior portions of the second surface, the first surface and the second surface defining a plurality of lobes extending outward from a central area of the chamber, the lobes being in fluid communication with the central area, and the lobes defining spaces positioned between the lobes located adjacent to each other, the

inserts being positioned within the spaces, and the inserts being less compressible than the chamber.

34. The article of footwear recited in claim 33, wherein the cushioning component is positioned within a heel portion of the midsole.

35. The article of footwear recited in claim 33, wherein an edge of the cushioning component protrude through an edge of the midsole.

36. The article of footwear recited in claim 33, wherein an upper surface of the cushioning component is coextensive with an upper surface of the midsole.

37. The article of footwear recited in claim 33, wherein the fluid is air.

38. The article of footwear recited in claim 33, wherein a first layer extends over at least a portion of the first surface and is secured to the inserts.

39. The article of footwear recited in claim 38, wherein a second layer extends over at least a portion of the second surface and is secured to the inserts.

40. The article of footwear recited in claim 33, wherein layers of material extend over the first surface and the second surface, the inserts being secured to the layers of material and extending between the layers of material.

41. The article of footwear recited in claim 33, wherein each insert includes a first portion positioned adjacent the first surface and a second portion positioned adjacent the second surface.

42. The article of footwear recited in claim 41, wherein the first portion is secured to the second portion.

43. The article of footwear recited in claim 41, wherein the first portion is formed of three concave structures, and the second portion is formed of three concave structures.

44. The article of footwear recited in claim 33, wherein central areas of the first surface and the second surface have a substantially planar configuration.

45. The article of footwear recited in claim 33, wherein the chamber includes at least five of the lobes.

46. An article of footwear having an upper and a sole structure secured to the upper, the sole structure comprising:

a midsole formed of a polymer foam material,

a cushioning component at least partially encapsulated by the foam material of the midsole, the cushioning component having:

a chamber enclosing a fluid having a pressure approximately equal to an ambient pressure of air surrounding the cushioning component, and the chamber having a first surface and an opposite second surface peripherally joined to form a volume for receiving the fluid, the first surface and the second surface being devoid of internal connections that secure interior portions of the first surface to interior portions of the second surface, the first surface and the second surface defining a plurality of lobes extending outward from a central area of the chamber, the lobes being in fluid communication with the central area, and the lobes defining spaces positioned between the lobes located adjacent to each other

a covering element having a first layer, a second layer, and a plurality of inserts extending between the first layer and the second layer, the first layer extending over the first surface, the second layer extending over the second surface, and the inserts being positioned within the spaces, the inserts each having a first portion and a second portion, the first portion being located adjacent the first surface and the second portion being located adjacent the second surface, and the first portion being joined with

the second portion to secure the covering element to the chamber, the inserts having a configuration that is less compressible than the chamber.

an outsole secured to the midsole.

47. The article of footwear recited in claim 46, wherein an edge of the cushioning component protrude through an edge of the midsole.

48. The article of footwear recited in claim 46, wherein an upper surface of the cushioning component is coextensive with an upper surface of the midsole.

49. The article of footwear recited in claim 46, wherein the fluid is air.

50. The article of footwear recited in claim 46, wherein the first portion is formed of three concave structures, and the second portion is formed of three concave structures.